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ABSTRACT

A study examined and described a program for implementing a writer's workshop to increase the literacy skills of reading and writing. The targeted population consisted of early childhood special education, kindergarten, and first-grade students in a growing, middle class community located in northern Illinois. The problems of poor reading achievement and writing skills were documented through published assessments and teacher assessments. Analysis of probable cause data revealed that students' poor literacy skills were related to the teaching of reading and writing as isolated skills, lack of student choice and ownership, health and social problems during preschool years, lack of exposure to print at early ages, and excessive television viewing habits. Tests and teacher observations revealed that students were unable to transfer skills between reading and writing. A review of solution strategies combined with an analysis of students' reading and writing skills resulted in the integration of a writer's workshop into the reading program. Post intervention data indicated an improvement in student writing and reading achievement. Every student showed an increase in at least one area of testing. As indicated by the data, 66% of all students scored above 80% on the letter recognition test, and 89% of all students advanced to a higher stage in their writing. (Contains 48 references, and 6 tables and 2 figures of data. Appendixes present test instruments, scoring sheets, sample student journal entries, and test results.) (Author/RS)

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ED 398 596

IMPROVING STUDENT READING AND WRITING SKILLS THROUGH THE USE OF WRITER'S WORKSHOP

by
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Abstract

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Title: Improving Student Reading And Writing Skills Through The Use Of Writer's Workshop

This report describes a program for implementing a writer's workshop in order to increase the literacy skills of reading and writing. The targeted population consisted of early childhood special education, kindergarten, and first grade students in a growing, middle class community, located in northern Illinois. The problems of poor reading achievement and writing skills were documented through published assessments and teacher assessments.

Analysis of probable cause data revealed that students' poor literacy skills were related to the teaching of reading and writing as isolated skills, lack of student choice and ownership, health and social problems during preschool years, lack of exposure to print at early ages, and excessive television viewing habits. Tests and teacher observations revealed that students were unable to transfer skills between reading and writing.

A review of solution strategies suggested by knowledgeable others, combined with an analysis of students' reading and writing skills, resulted in the integration of a writer's workshop into the reading program.

Post intervention data indicated an improvement in student writing and reading achievement. Every student showed an increase in at least one area of testing. As indicated by the data, 66 percent of all students scored above 80 percent on the letter recognition test. Eighty-nine percent of all students advanced to a higher stage in their writing.

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Chapter 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of Problem

The students of the targeted special education early childhood class and regular education kindergarten and first grade classes exhibited poor acquisition of literacy skills (reading and writing). Evidence for the existence of the problem included teacher-made tests and teacher observations.

Immediate Problem Context

The students in this school came from a small rural community which included two small towns, scattered sub-divisions, and farms. This rural elementary school serviced students pre-kindergarten through third grade and had a total population of 432 students. Based on enrollment, state standards considered this to be a medium sized school. The population of this school was 96.5 percent White, 1.4 percent Black, 1.2 percent Hispanic, and 0.9 percent Asian/Pacific Islander. Families of students that received public aid, lived in institutions or foster homes, or received free or reduced lunch were considered low-income students. Approximately 11 percent of the students were considered low-income. Students had an attendance rate of 95.2 percent. Students who enrolled or left the school during the school year determined the mobility rate. The student mobility rate for the school was 11.5 percent. The number of truant students who were absent from school without valid cause for ten percent or more of the last 180 school days was zero (Community Unit School District 323, 1994).

The school staff included one principal, 21 full-time teachers, and seven part-time teachers. The 28 full and part-time teaching staff averaged ten years of district teaching experience. Within the school, there were eight teachers with a Master's Degree and 20 teachers with a Bachelor's Degree. Staff included four special education cooperative support members, five special education aides, and three regular education aides. The teaching staff was 100 percent white, with 11 percent being male and 89 percent being female (Community Unit School District 323, 1995).

The school day went from 8:00 AM to 2:35 PM. There were four half-day early childhood sessions, four half-day kindergarten sessions, four sections each of first and second grades, and five third grade class sections. The average class size was 21.3 students for kindergarten, 23.8 students for grade one, and 23.0 students for grade three. This school had a pupil to teacher ratio of 21.5:1 (Community Unit School District 323, 1995). Within this school, the core subjects were mathematics, science, language arts, and social studies. Children were grouped by ability for reading in grades one through three. Other curriculum subjects included music and physical education taught by certified personnel. Special education students were serviced through one cross-categorical self-contained/resource classroom and one learning disability resource room. Incorporated in the school's curriculum were a gifted program and Chapter I math and reading.

The school offered a latch-key program to the students. The program was available from 6:30 AM to 7:30 AM and after school from 2:40 PM to 5:30 PM. The latch-key program was supervised by four adults and two high school students. Approximately six students attended the program in the morning and 50 to 60 students attended after school (C. Kloster, personal communication, June 12, 1995).

The elementary school contained two levels and a wing. The wing housed six classrooms. One of the classrooms was used for physical education and another was used for music. The lower level of the school had eight classrooms, a multi-purpose room, kitchen, and offices. The multi-purpose room was used for physical education and also for lunch. A hot lunch program was offered. Ten classrooms were located on the school's upper level. The learning center contained a library and a 12 Macintosh computer lab.

In 1992, the community began to change with the development of approximately eight new sub-divisions. At that time, more than 200 new homes had been built, with the possibility of 300 to 400 more (J.D. Bevan, personal communication, June 2, 1995). The new homes averaged 60 school age children per 100 homes. It was estimated that 60 percent of the children moving into the district were school age and 40 percent were preschool age (Strategic Planning Group, 1994). There were several ramifications from this new expansion. With the increase in population, it was necessary to expand and remodel the current school facilities. It was foreseen, that in the near future, there would be a need for the building of additional school facilities. During the 1994-1995 school year, the school board felt the growth patterns presented a need for a referendum. In the Spring of 1995, a building referendum was voted upon and was defeated. The current facilities were inadequate to meet the large influx of students. Several modular units were added to ease the overcrowding situation.

The Surrounding Community

This school existed within a unit district that covered 100 square miles and was located in close proximity to one of the largest metropolitan cities within the state (Strategic Planning Group, 1994). The school district served a population that included two small villages, four townships, and several rural subdivisions. The

majority of the students were bussed due to the large area covered by the district. Pre-kindergarten through twelfth grades were serviced by this unit district. This district included a pre-kindergarten through third grade elementary building, one upper elementary site containing fourth and fifth grades, one middle school building containing sixth through eighth grades, and one high school building containing grades nine through twelve. Three of the buildings were centrally located, with the upper elementary site located seven miles to the west. The district student enrollment totalled 1,347. The racial/ethnic background of this student population was 98.1 percent White, 0.6 percent Black, 0.8 percent Hispanic, and 0.57 percent Asian/Pacific Islander. The district low-income students totaled 8.5 percent. District operating expenditure per pupil was $3,915. There were approximately 85 full and part-time teachers with an average salary of $32,587. In the district, there was one superintendent and a principal for each of the four school sites. The average administrative salary was $52,735 (Community Unit School District 323, 1994). The seven locally elected school board members and the superintendent encouraged community input concerning all major school decisions.

The community included two small villages. The community shared the services of a public library and a volunteer fire-department. The primary industry was farming. The larger village had two small industries. One was a plastic injection molding company and the other produced vinyl clad windows. A small number of businesses were located throughout the village. These included a grocery store, post office, chiropractic office, dental office, cafe, fast food restaurant, flower shop, gas station, funeral home, two auto repair businesses, and three hair salons. This village also supported a small police force. The smaller village had a grocery store, post office, meat processing plant, screw-products plant, and an agricultural supply

store. Although there were small businesses in the community, the majority of the population was employed in the nearby metropolitan area.

The community provided financial assistance and volunteer help for the unit school district. Some of the support groups included a public school foundation, a fans' association, and parent-teacher organizations. School facilities and activities provided a majority of the community's recreational opportunities. Civic organizations available to the community included Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, 4-H, church youth groups, and youth sport organizations.

The community was comprised mainly of traditional middle-American families, typically two parents at home with two children (Frampton, 1991). The median family income was $36,544, and the per capita income was $12,888 (U.S. Census, 1990). The ethnic make-up of the community reflected that of the student population which was primarily white. There were seven Protestant churches in the community. Due to the similarities of the communities' ethnic and religious backgrounds, conflicts in these areas did not have an impact on the schools.

The failed April 1995 referendum definitely had an impact on the schools and community. The issues concerning the referendum divided the community. The failure of the referendum was due in part to the increase in the tax-base for new homes and the farming community, the proposed closing of an outlying village school, and general concerns about the plan. This caused further dissention among groups within the community and schools. The district was left to deal with problems concerning the accommodation of the influx of new students.

Regional and National Context of Problem

Literacy has been a national and a universal concern for years. It was so much of a concern that in 1990 when the George Bush administration wrote the

National Education Goals, literacy was included. The goal stated "that by the year 2000 every adult American would be literate and would possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship" (Roettger, 1993, p. 3). The Clinton administration also made literacy a part of the National Education Goals.

The problems associated with literacy were far-reaching. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in the 1992 Reading Report Card for the Nations and the States reported that 59 percent of the fourth graders, 69 percent of the eighth graders, and 75 percent of the twelfth graders were estimated to have reached the basic level or beyond. Basic level was defined as partial mastery of the knowledge and skills needed for proficient work at each grade (Mullis, et al., 1994). As quoted in Reading Today (NAEP data, 1993) Alan Farstrup, the Executive Director of the International Reading Association (IRA) stated:

> While some 59 percent of the fourth graders in the assessment reached or exceeded the basic level, the fact that 41 percent did not underscores the importance of continuing and strengthening efforts to provide even more effective reading instruction for elementary students and beyond. (p. 11)

Another indicator showing the extent of the problem was the NAEP results that stated only 40 percent of 17 year olds and young adults ages 21 through 25 read at an adept level. The adept level was defined as the level at which most high school textbooks were written. Approximately 60 percent of this age level were unable to read periodicals and other reading material written at the adept level (Aaron, Chall, Durkin, Goodman, and Strickland, 1990).

Concerns have been raised by industry due to the poor literacy skills of high school graduates and the work force in general. Reading Today citing the New York Times stated that United States businesses lose 25 to 30 billion dollars a year due to

the poor literacy skills of employees. The poor skill levels have also prohibited the United States workers from competing adequately with workers from other developed countries (U.S. Survey, 1993).

According to Jim Trelease, as quoted in the Rockford Register Star (Kranz, 1995),

> So the world has become very, very complicated. We have a limited number of spaces for custodians. We have a limited number of spaces for Hertz rental shuttle bus drivers. The world out there requires people to be able to use computers, to read manuals, to read equipment manuals in factories that are so complicated that unless you know how to read, you're not going to stay employed very long. You have to read very well, too (p. 1C).

The military branches have also voiced concerns regarding the levels of literacy exhibited by recruits. Approximately six percent of people enlisting did not meet the required minimum literacy standards. Poor literacy skills limited the types of training available to the recruits (Aarron, 1990).

It has been estimated that 90 million adults cannot read at a fifth grade level. Forty million of these adults can barely read or write at all (Merina, 1995). A report by the United States government on adult literacy showed that 47 percent of American adults had limited literacy skills and could not use a bus schedule or write a brief letter about a billing error. As cited by the National Adult Literacy survey, adults in the United States do not have the literacy skills needed to integrate complex information. It also showed that people with limited literacy skills had higher unemployment, lower wages, and voted less often than those with higher literacy skills. This provides "the clearest evidence to date that literacy skills are closely linked to economic well-being and full participation in civic life" (Reading Today, 1993, p. 1).

Another key concern of literacy was written language. As cited in the Journal of Educational Research, "for the past two decades, educators have been disenchanted with the quality of writing produced by public school children" (Varble, 1990, p. 245). This concern has grown recently due to the results of competency tests given in more than 39 states. Although students spent 40 percent of the day doing pencil/paper tasks, a small percentage of these tasks involved composing text. The majority of this time was spent writing answers in response to a question, workbook exercises, practice in penmanship, vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and grammar (Varble, 1990).

NAEP reported in 1992 the writing proficiency levels for grades 4, 8 and 11. Thirteen percent of the fourth graders, 75 percent of the eighth graders, and 87 percent of the eleventh graders could begin to write focused and clear responses to tasks. Zero percent of the fourth graders, 25 percent of the eighth graders, and 36 percent of the eleventh graders could write complete responses containing sufficient information. Zero percent of the fourth graders, two percent of the eighth graders, and two percent of the eleventh graders could write effective responses containing supportive details and discussions (Mullis, 1994). As quoted by McCaig in the Journal of Educational Research, "the inability of students to compose an intelligible, coherent passage of written English is a national disgrace and a source of outrage in communities throughout the country" (Varble, 1990, p. 245).

Chapter 2

PROBLEM EVIDENCE AND PROBABLE CAUSE

Problem Evidence

In order to assess the students' levels of performance in the areas of reading and writing the following measures were used: letter recognition, concepts about print, word lists, and three student writing samples. Both published and teacher-made tests were used (see Appendix).

Table 1

Number of Students in Each Score Class for the Letter Identification Test

Aug. 29, 1995 Through Sept. 19, 1995

Score Class	Early Childhood	Kindergarten	Reading Recovery	First Grade
91 - 100	0	2	0	0
81 - 90	1	6	1	2
71 - 80	1	1	3	2
61 - 70	0	3	0	4
51 - 60	0	0	1	0
41 - 50	1	0	1	1
40 and Below	10	7	1	0

The letter identification test assessed the students' knowledge of upper and lower case letters (Appendix A). Of the 13 early childhood students, 85 percent scored below 50 percent. Thirty-seven percent of the kindergarten students scored 50 percent or below. Forty percent of the first grade students scored 50 percent or below. Zero percent of the early childhood and first grade

students scored above 90 percent. Eleven percent of the kindergarten students scored above 90 percent.

Table 2

Number of Students in Each Score Class for Concepts About Print Test

Aug. 29, 1995 Through Sept. 19, 1995

Score Class	Early Childhood	Kindergarten	Reading Recovery	First Grade
61 - 70	0	1	0	0
51 - 60	0	1	1	3
41 - 50	0	3	1	3
40 and Below	13	14	5	3

The Concepts About Print test assesses a student's knowledge about the ways language is printed (Appendix C). Analysis of the test data indicates that the students have not acquired many of the concepts needed to support reading acquisition. Of the students assessed, 100 percent of the early childhood students, 74 percent of the kindergarten students, and 50 percent of the first grade students scored 40 percent or below on the test. Only two percent of all students assessed scored above 60 percent.

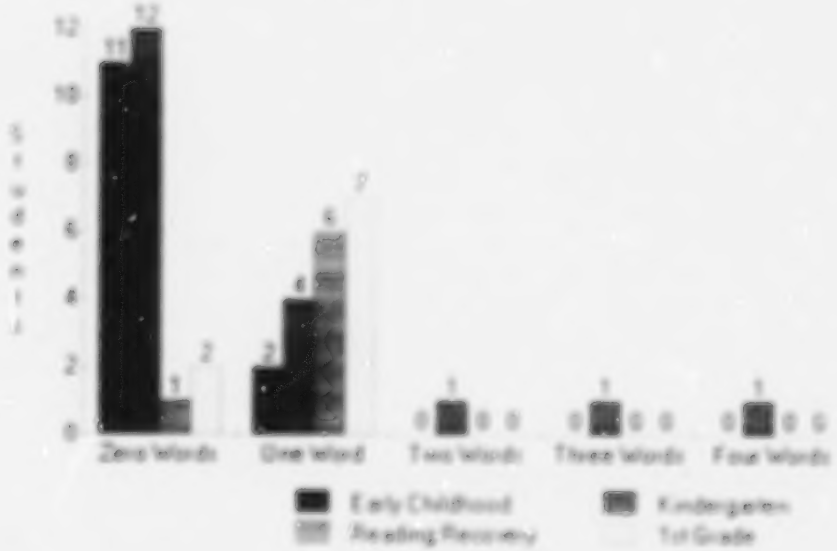

Figure 1

Word Identification Scores

Aug. 29, 1995 Through Sept. 19, 1995

Word tests provide a sampling of a child's reading vocabulary. The words may occur frequently in the reading texts. The child is shown three lists consisting of fifteen words each. The child chooses one list to read (Appendix E). Analysis of the test scores showed that 72 percent of the early childhood and kindergarten students knew zero words from the word list. Eighty-one percent of the first graders knew one out of the 15 words. Results of the testing suggest that all the students have a limited reading vocabulary.

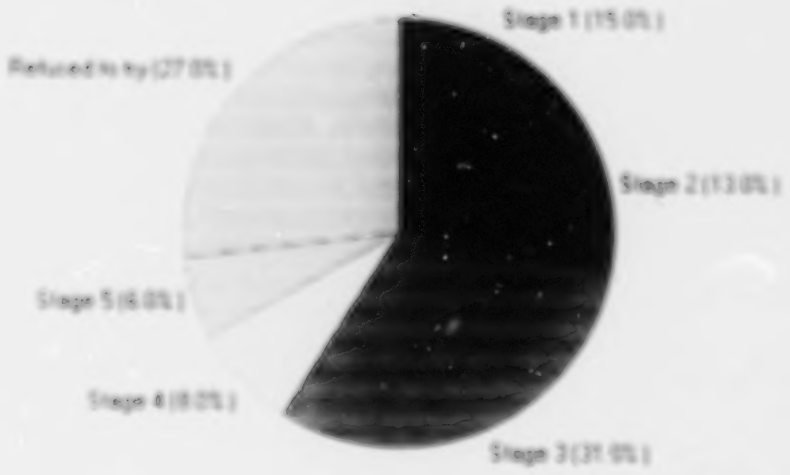

Figure 2

Stages of Writing

Aug. 29, 1995 Through Sept. 19, 1995

A child goes through six stages during the development of their writing. Scribbling is the first stage of writing. During stage two, the students begin to use linear drawings in their writing. Letterlike forms are used in stage three. Stage four includes letter and early word symbol relationships. In stage five, children begin to use inventive spelling. A child reaches the final stage of writing, stage six, when standard spelling is used (Appendix G).

Results indicate that 28 percent of the students were in stages one and two, where scribbling and linear drawings were used in their writings. Thirty-one percent of the students were in stage three. These students were using letterlike forms in their writings, but showed no relationship between sounds and letters. Fourteen percents of the students were in stages four and five. These students were using letter sound relationships in their writing. None of the students used

standard spelling in their writings, therefore none were in stage six of writing. Twenty-seven percent of the students refused to attempt any writing. The teacher felt the refusals were due to the children's awareness of their inability to spell correctly. The children verbally indicated their inability to write during designated writing sessions.

It should be noted that the first grade reading class was a low ability group. Some of the students as noted by the tables and the graph received additional reading help outside the classroom.

Probable Causes

After analyzing the current programs of instruction being used at the site, the researchers felt that there were several factors contributing to the poor reading achievement. The special education early childhood students have language delays and/or difficulties with speech. This could be a result of physical problems, lack of models, or a lack of opportunities to experience the world. The researchers noticed that some of the students experiencing problems with reading in the kindergarten and first grade classes are students that received early intervention services. These services included speech, special education early childhood, and early childhood at-risk programs. Thirty-seven percent of the kindergarten students and thirty-eight percent of the first grade students in the research sample received early intervention services.

The kindergarten students were previously taught the letter and letter sound(s) by doing activities that revolved around a letter-of-the-week. There was no formal instruction in writing at this level except for the proper formation of the letters. There were no allowances for individual differences. Instruction went on to a new letter-of-the-week even if the students did not know the current letter or

letter sound(s) of the week. Every four or five weeks a review week was scheduled in order to review all the letters and sounds already taught. The researchers felt that the children experiencing difficulty were not getting enough varied exposure to the letters and sounds in a meaningful context. The researchers were not satisfied by the level of transfer that the children were making between their letter knowledge and writing.

The first grade students were grouped for reading based on achievement. There was a low, middle, and a high group. The low group moved at a slower pace and opportunities available to the higher level students were not available to lower achieving students. For example, the high group had access to a computerized reading incentive program and the higher students also were able to do more extension activities related to the basal stories. Typically, reading instruction did not include writing other than that required for the workbook.

The researchers were dissatisfied with the lack of literacy achievement and instructional methods. Due to this a review of the literature was conducted to find solutions to this problem.

Marie Clay (1991) lists three concepts that were developed to help understand children's progress in learning to read that now have become "insurmountable barriers, blocking the development of early intervention programmes" (p. 17). The first of these barriers is the theory that intelligence will eventually win out. This is the belief that children who are late starters will eventually, if given enough time, catch up. Most children will not catch up without different instruction. The second barrier is the concept of reading age as determined by the child's level of performance on a standardized test. The reading age really tells nothing about a child's reading skills. This is left up to interpretation. The third barrier is the concept of reading readiness. This implies

that a child is not ready for formal reading instruction until a certain level is attained and that there is a time at which a child is not yet a reader. A major problem with this is that the educational system expects that all children be at a certain level before they are ready for formal instruction. A better understanding of literacy needs to be developed if schools are going to improve literacy skills.

Traditionally, American schools have emphasized the teaching of reading skills. A skill based curriculum does not allow for individual differences. Children are expected to perform in the same manner within the same time frame (Strickland, 1994/1995). "The basal text, accompanying worksheets, and mandatory standard testing have contributed to the emphasis on skills mastery as an end in itself" (Routman, 1988, p. 40). The prereading skills children are being taught have little effect on their success as readers and writers. Examples of the skills being taught include: correct letter formation, colors, visual discrimination, and long and short vowel sounds. In support of this, Durkin conducted a study in 1966. Results of the study showed that children who had not mastered the required prereading skills were still able to learn to read (Raines & Canady, 1990).

> According to Ken Goodman (1986),
>
> We took apart the language and turned it into words, syllables, and isolated sounds. Unfortunately, we also postponed its natural purpose - the communication of meaning - and turned it into a set of abstraction, unrelated to the needs and experiences of the children we sought to help (p. 7).

Creativity and higher level thinking skills are not encouraged. Instead "one correct answer" is expected by the teacher (Routman, 1988).

Phonics has been thought to be a key variable in learning to read. Problems have been created because phonics has been taught to the exclusion of other important variables such as, meaning, syntax, and visual information. Learning to read is more difficult for children because they have not been given opportunities to use all these variables and see how they can work together (Clay, 1991).

About 60 percent of elementary schools are using ability and achievement to determine instructional groups (Wheelock, 1995). Ability grouping has several harmful effects. Long-term ability grouping has been shown to have negative effects on the self-esteem of poor readers (Strickland, 1994/1995). Ability grouping places labels on students as either slow or fast learners, that are associated with the pace of learning. Different expectation levels are associated with the differing levels. Students often stay in the same group throughout their schooling, often being originally placed due to subjective and limiting assessments (Shannon, 1989).

Research has shown many differences in the instruction of ability groups. These differences include: teacher interruption behaviors, the amount of students' reading during reading instruction, the content of instruction, and the difficulty level of the reading materials. Teachers tended to interrupt oral reading of lower ability groups two to five times more often than higher ability groups. Teachers pronounced troublesome words immediately for the low group to keep the lesson moving. During oral reading, teachers focus on phonic characteristics of isolated words and the pronunciation of the words with the lower groups, while higher groups read texts that were easy for them, with misread words occurring about one in 100 words. Low groups are often given difficult materials with

approximately 15 missed words for every 100 words, inhibiting the use of context and making more word by word readers (Shannon, 1989).

Placement in ability groups often occurs during the first few weeks of first grade. Placement is usually made based on student's standardized achievement test scores and/or teachers' judgment (Shannon,1989). Donna Eder is quoted as saying,

> Since most students are assigned to ability groups within the first few weeks of first grade, it is highly unlikely that accurate assessments of student aptitudes have been made. The lack of accurate measures of academic aptitude in early grades is particularly important since it increases the likelihood of ethnic and class bias in ability group assignment (Shannon, 1989, p. 104).

Teachers have relied heavily on test scores to form reading groups, often rank ordering the scores and then dividing them according to high, middle, and low ability groups. The Committee on Ability Testing for the National Academy of Sciences found that achievement test scores correlate highly positively with social class status. Lower class students are more likely to be assigned to lower reading groups, remedial programs, and special education classes.

Achievement tests tend to be based on experiences instead of cognitive abilities, often creating a bias against ethnic and social groups. "Tests seem as much an indicator of family background as they are a projective device concerning students' true potential for learning to read" (Shannon, 1989, p. 105).

Basal tests are another form of assessment frequently used to monitor student learning. Basal tests are used to determine the mastery level of skills and vocabulary suggested in guidebooks. Basal tests are keyed to a scope and sequence of decoding and comprehension skills. The criterion for passing is

usually set at 80 percent correct. Due to the high number of skills being tested, often only three or four items per skill, the passing criterion is dropped to 67 or 75 percent. These tests tend to "fragment reading into isolated skills, assessing at best skill knowledge, not reading, and at worst, familiarity with one set of commercial materials" (Shannon, 1989, p. 99). Typically only 20 percent of the book tests deal with comprehension of passages with students rarely asked to read more than a couple of sentences during testing (Shannon, 1989).

Reading and writing are often thought to be separate skills. These skills are often taught in isolation and out of context (Goodman, 1986). Only after a child had developed the necessary prereading skills was reading instruction begun. Writing topics are often assigned, preventing student choice (Fox, 1993). "Learning to write waited until reading was well underway" (Strickland, 1990, p. 20). Writing lesson have been concerned with neatness, correct spelling, and proper letter formation (Strickland, 1990). Very little time has been spent doing actual writing. The types of writing done in classrooms include workbook exercises, phonics drills, fill-in-the-blanks, and copying (Goodman, 1986).

> Worksheets do not develop writers who can think for themselves, who can create extended texts, who can be logical, who can use voice or tone, or who can write with power. It is perfectly possible to be able to fill in endless worksheets correctly yet not be able to write a single coherent paragraph, let alone a longer piece of connected prose (Fox, 1993, p. 69).

Schools in the United States generally respond to student writing using intensive correction. Intensive correction is the marking of every error on every paper a student writes. Research has shown that this is an ineffective practice. "Marking all the errors is no more effective, in terms of future growth or improvement, than marking none of them. The only difference is the huge

expenditure of teacher time and the student demoralization which accompany this practice" (Zemelman, Daniels, & Hyde, 1993, p. 187). Grading every paper also limits the amount of practice a student receives. The students don't practice beyond what the teacher is capable of grading (Zemelman, Daniels, & Hyde, 1993).

Student choice is also restricted in the area of reading. Teachers often place restrictions on what children can read. Restrictions include the number of pages a book must have, the level of difficulty, and the types of books (Fox, 1993).

Basals are collections of simplified text that have controlled sentence structure and vocabulary (Goodman, 1986). Basals lack emotional content and usually contain poorly done illustrations. This is because the main goal of basals is to teach children to read, not to develop a love for reading (Fox, 1993). Basals do not expose children to a variety of materials such as newspapers, magazines or expository and narrative texts (Zemelman, Daniels, & Hyde, 1993).

Basal texts are skills oriented, focusing heavily on phonics. The philosophy being that intensive learning in the area of phonics leads to reading competency. "The over-emphasis on phonics actually prevents them (students) from using more natural, meaningful strategies" (Routman, 1988, p. 24).

There has also been the practice of basalizing literature. The basals may contain real literature, but this real literature is accompanied by a large number of worksheets focusing on phonics and skills. This extensive paperwork prevents children from merely enjoying and appreciating literature. Teachers also need to be aware that the literature in the basals may have been altered or modified in some way. "The publishers, in their zeal to keep selections to ten to twelve pages, often omit setting, characterization, and descriptive detail and leave a

"bare bones" plot while adding illustrations" (Routman, 1988, p. 24). The basalization of literature still lacks the benefits of real literature. Learners still do not have choice, all students are expected to read the same stories and write about the same topics. Learners are controlled by the materials. They look for someone else's meaning and answer someone else's questions (Freeman, 1991).

One reason why some children do not have the skills needed to make good progress in reading is they have not had a range of experiences during their preschool years. Children who have not had experiences with books will not have the opportunity to learn that books contain interesting ideas or that the language that is being heard is related to the story in the book. It is also necessary for a child to have experiences that develop gross motor skills. If these skills are not developed, a child may not be ready for the finer motor activities required in school, for example, the motor skills of eye movement and hand-eye-coordination.

A child's preschool language development is vital to growth in reading. The child must have many opportunities to converse with an adult. The more experience the child has, the more mature and developed the language will be. Children who have not had opportunities to explore with language during preschool years will have a more difficult time with reading than children who have had a wide range of experiences with language (Clay, 1991).

Preschool children must also have practice developing visual perception in order to later promote reading progress. A child gains visual perception experience in play, in conversation with people who point out features of objects and pictures to the child , and also by having contact with books. Visual perception is important for reading because it is needed to "scan new material,

organize one's perception of it, remember it, perhaps refer to it by some label, or assign meaning in some other way" (Clay, 1991, p. 38).

Reading involves the senses of sight, hearing, and kinesthetic sensation (senses associated with movement). Sensory loss can contribute to poor literacy skills. Sensory losses can limit the child's grammar which in turn may lead to poor comprehension of oral and written language. The child with sensory losses may not have an understanding of some of the most common sentence structures used in books. As a result the child is not able to predict what might happen next in the sentences of their books. Sensory losses can also cause a child to have deficits in experience. A child uses their experiences to help understand stories.

A child that has physical limitations may also have difficulty with reading. The handicap may prevent the child from having a variety of movement experiences. It may affect a child's control over his or her movements. As a result of this, a child's visual scanning behavior may be poorly developed.

"Television has become the most pervasive and powerful influence on the human family and, at the same time, the major stumbling block to literacy in America" (Trelease, 1989, p. 17). Research shows that the more television a child watches, the greater the decline in student achievement. Children who watch more than 11 hours of television weekly have lower achievement scores. Children who watched 11 hours or less of television per week showed no decline in achievement (Kranz, 1995). In 1987, the average television set and VCR were used seven and a half hours per day (Trelease, 1989). This means that the television was on 38 and a half hours per week and that children were watching three times as much television as they should. Only 36 percent of parents restricted television viewing (Trelease, 1989).

There are several reasons why television is a stumbling block to literacy. First, watching television is a passive activity. Television does not allow people to do their own thinking, imagining, speaking, and exploring. These are the very skills that are fostered by reading. Television also prevents children from exploring life. As previously mentioned, a child who has not explored and experienced the environment around them will have poorer literacy skills. Another problem with television is that it has become a baby-sitter for parents. This prevents children from experiencing quality time with parents. Children are not conversing with adults or learning from this experience. These are necessary things for good literacy skills.

Children need models of literacy skills. Without adult modeling of these skills, children tend to show delays in literacy. There are children who are not observing adults reading for pleasure. Evidence of this includes: 44 percent of adults in the United States do not read a book in the course of a year, with only 50 percent of the population reading the newspaper (Trelease, 1989).

Reading aloud is also very important. "You become a reader because you say and heard someone you admired enjoying the experience, someone led you to the world of books even before you could read, let you taste the magic of stories, took you to the library, and allowed you to stay up later at night to read in bed" (Trelease, 1989). Reading aloud in an advertisement for encouraging lifelong readers. A child who has not been read to aloud will not be hooked on reading because these literacy activities have not been experienced (Trelease, 1989).

After analyzing the site and reviewing the literature, the researchers found several factors contributing to the poor literacy skills of certain students. The causes included: preschool experiences, health problems, a lack of models,

ability grouping, no allowances made for student differences, lack of student choice, and reading and writing taught separately

Chapter 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Review of the Literature

Currently, there are two different approaches being used in American schools for the teaching of reading and writing. One methodology used for the teaching of reading and writing is the traditional perspective (Strickland, 1990). The other methodology is the whole language approach.

The traditional perspective focusses on the use of reading readiness, phonics, basal readers, ability grouping, and commercially prepared workbooks and worksheets. Reading and writing are taught as isolated skills. Reading is considered a step-by-step process.

According to Marie Clay (1991), "reading readiness implies that children become ready for formal reading at different times as a result of different rates of maturing, and that there is a stage at which the child is not yet a reader" (p.19). Direct instruction for reading readiness skills consists of learning letter names, letter-sound relationships, and a variety of visual-perceptual tasks. "Real" reading instruction begins after the children have mastered these pre-reading skills. (Strickland, 1990).

The traditional perspective also includes phonics instruction. "Phonics is the set of relationships between the sound system of oral language and the letter system of written language" (Goodman, 1986, p.37). Phonics is a teaching of rules and exceptions for sounding out words (Routman, 1988) using a part-to-

whole methodology (Griffith, Klesius, & Kromrey, 1992). Phonics instruction is taught in isolation not within a context. According to Regie Routman (1988), "the belief is that only an intensive grounding in phonics will lead to reading competency" (p.24). Basal readers are based on the teaching of skills and phonics. These skills and phonics are taught by using a high concentration of published workbooks and worksheets. Skills are drilled repeatedly in isolation. The basals are accompanied by teacher's manuals that direct the teacher in the instruction. Basals tend to be organized around a controlled vocabulary.

Students are often placed in groups based on reading ability. The poor readers are placed together in a low reading group while more proficient readers are placed in middle and high groups. These groups are taught separately using varied pacing.

From the traditional standpoint, once a child has learned to read, writing instruction begins. "Traditional writing lessons have been associated with neatness, correct spelling, and proper letter formation" (Strickland, 1990, p.22). Emphasis is placed on the quality of the end product.

In a whole language classroom, teachers believe children learn best when learning is kept whole, meaningful, interesting, and functional (Fisher, 1991). Ken Goodman (1986) states "the psychology of learning teaches us that we learn from the whole to parts. That's why whole language teachers only deal with language parts - letters, sounds, phrases, sentences - in the context of whole real language" (p.9). Whole language is immersion in language in a holistic context. The child is provided with rich, authentic experiences to expand oral and written languages while using them to learn (Goodman, 1991). Whole language supports the belief that reading and writing are related language processes. "In a whole language program readers and writers develop control over the phonic

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generalizations in the context of using written language sensibly" (Goodman, 1986, p.36).

Whole language also supports the theory of emergent literacy. Emergent literacy is a description of the long process a child goes through in order to become literate (Clay, 1991). Emergent literacy begins early in a child's life and is ongoing (Strickland, 1990). This implies that children entering school will be at different points in the emerging literacy process (Clay, 1991).

Subject areas are studied using thematic units and writing is integrated in all content areas. Students experience many types of writing. Types of writing include letters, class newspapers, journals, stories, and functional writing (grocery lists, calendars, menus, etc.). Students write rough drafts, revise, and edit their work (Jacobson, 1991). Invented spelling is encouraged. Invented spelling is the writing of whatever sound the child hears in a word (Routman, 1988). Emphasis in a whole language program is on the process, not the final product. Instead of preplanned drills in letter and word formation, children are provided "with the tools and encouragement they need to continue their natural desire to construct meaningful communication through the medium of print - a process they began long before coming to school" (Raines & Canady, 1990, p.72).

Reading is taught using a wide range of books and materials, including children's literature, poems, song lyrics, and recipes (Edelsky, Altwerger, & Flores, 1991). There are no set skills the child must learn before they participate in reading and writing activities. Whole language looks at the child's interests and strengths and capitalizes on them. Whole language encourages children to be responsible for their own learning. Teachers do not follow a teacher's guide with step-by-step lessons or a prescribed, sequential order for teaching skills (Raines & Canady, 1990).

Whole language uses various grouping strategies. The teacher assesses the individual needs of the students to determine the type of temporary grouping needed. "Groups are flexible and are formed on academic, social, or intellectual needs or interests" (Dalrymple, 1991).

The whole language classroom is rich in print with charts, posters, and children's writings decorating the walls. The classroom contains a library/reading area with a wide range of children's literature and other reading materials. A writing center with an assortment of writing materials is also available.

Many of the solutions suggested by the literature for increasing literacy skills of students are based on whole language concepts. The literature also suggests that parents play a vital role in developing children's literacy skills.

Traditionally, skills have been directly taught in a fixed sequence and are practiced in isolation. The focus is on automatic, correct responses. Skills are lower-level activities that are teacher directed. Strategies on the other hand, are skills taught in a meaningful context as the need arises (Routman, 1992). Strategies are student directed and are a high-level thinking activity (Routman, 1988). "The learner must know how and why to apply the skill; that is what elevates the skill to the strategy level" (Strickland, 1994/95, p.297). Teachers often see the difference between the use of a skill and a strategy in the classroom. A child that can complete a worksheet with 100 percent accuracy but is not able to transfer that skill to "real" reading and writing activities, is not using strategies (Strickland, 1994/95).

"Whole language teachers understand that learning ultimately takes place one child at a time" (Goodman, 1986, p.29). Schools need to look at where a child is at and go from there, building on strengths and improving weak areas. The teacher tries to create situations that will guide a learner and provide growth

It is the child's needs that are the deciding factor on what is taught and how. The teacher knows that each child is on their own timetable for learning and does not try to impose a standard of performance on that child.

Cross-ability grouping has several advantages over grouping by ability. Cross-ability grouping is a heterogeneous grouping of students. Cross-ability grouping helps develop motivation and interest for the poorer readers as they realize that they have a lot of skills and talent that benefit the whole group (Goodman, 1986). Students also learn to respect and value each other and work cooperatively. Cross-ability grouping also provides poor readers with a model of good reading (C. Paulsen, personal communication, July 5, 1995).

A child's desire to read and write needs to be developed simultaneously. "Concepts about the nature of language in print apply to both activities: what is learned in writing becomes a resource in reading and vice versa" (Clay, 1991, p.96). Writing contributes to early reading progress in several ways. The child's writing is a "rough indicator of what the child is attending to in print" (Clay, 1991, p.109) and it also is an indicator of the strategies the child is using for word productions. Writing also provides extra experiences for the child to develop an understanding of literacy concepts.

Through the use of thematic units, integration of reading and writing is possible throughout the curriculum. Thematic units provide a focus for the development of cognitive and language skills by building on prior knowledge and interests. These skills are developed through the involvement of students in the planning of the units. Activities are therefore authentic and relevant to the st ents (Goodman, 1986).

Classroom centers are another way to help learning take place by integrating content areas. Examples of centers include reading, writing, math,

social studies, science, art, and dramatic play. Materials arranged in centers need to be functional, reflect real life experiences, and give literacy meaning for students. Classrooms are arranged to reflect teacher and student needs. Organization is a key element for ease of use by the children. The teacher explains purpose, use, and placement of new items as they are integrated throughout the school year. Independent, self-directed learning takes place in the various centers (Strickland & Morrow, 1989).

Thematic units and centers allow for real writing opportunities. Real writing refers to writing that has purpose and is meaningful to the writer. There are many forms of real writing including letters, notes, and stories. Fill-in-the-blank exercises, copying from the encyclopedia, answering end of the chapter questions, and pretend letters are a few examples of "unreal" writing (Fox, 1993).

A teacher's goal is to prepare children for the real world, so that they are productive members of society. In order to reach this goal, it makes good sense to give children the chance to do real writing. Adults in the real world have little time to engage in anything but real writing. Why should it be any different for children? By having children do real writing they are constantly learning how to do the real thing better. "Giving unreal writing activities to our students is about as useful as giving occupational therapy for stroke victims to people who are in perfect health !" (Fox, 1993, p.4).

Student choice in reading and writing is very important. According to Ken Goodman (1986), "Children of all ages write best when they are able to choose their own topics" (p.73). If a particular theme is being studied the teacher may want to suggest some topics, however, the final choice of topic is left up to the child. By allowing students to make their own choices, learning becomes meaningful and relevant. Also, by giving the children the right to make their own

choices, the teacher is empowering students. The more literacy skills a child possesses, the more power the child has. This power is what allows a child to succeed in today's society (Goodman, 1986). Allowing children to choose their own reading materials is also important. By restricting reading materials, teachers may also be restricting a child's desire to read. Children are often told that a book is too hard or too easy, too long or too short. "Choice is a personal matter that changes with need. We should let it be" (Fox, 1993, p.66). Student choice creates a powerful, independent learner with a bright future.

The use of literature over basals has several advantages in the development of literacy skills. Literature is written using natural language, whereas, basals are written using a controlled vocabulary resulting in unnatural language. Literature exposes children to different genres on which student writing can be based. Literature also offers children a large variety of topics. According to Mem Fox (1993),

> Topics and ideas are hard to find, it's true, but they're harder to find if children are living in a literacy desert. Basal readers provide no ideas: no humor, no exquisite story structure, no consequences, no real heroes or heroines, no heavenly language that repeats or rhymes or beats its way through a story, no emotions at all (p.64).

Reading and writing workshops are structured around many of the solutions already mentioned. The workshops provide students with a chance to choose their own materials and be responsible for their learning. Reading and writing workshops are productive, purposeful and real. Children realize that reading and writing are social activities through conferencing with the teacher and peers and the sharing of work. Mini-lessons, brief instructional lessons, begin each workshop. Topics for the mini-lessons are teacher selected according to

student need. Most mini-lessons teach reading and writing strategies, qualities of good writing, and presentation of various genres (Avery, 1993; Zemelman & Daniels, 1994).

Writing workshop provides students with daily uninterrupted blocks of time. This allows students time to think, write, confer, choose, read, and rewrite. Students learn writing mechanics in whole meaningful contexts. Writer's workshop exposes children to the processes writers experience in the real world (Atwell, 1987).

Journals can be included in writer's workshop. Journal writing is an important step in the integration of writing and reading. Daily journals are written on self-selected topics (Routman, 1988). Journals are a place where children can explore without restrictions. Exploration takes place in the areas of spelling, grammar, topics, and genres (Lin, 1991). Journals are written in a child's own language making the journals memorable and meaningful to the child. This makes it easier for the child to read their journal. Journals allow teachers to get to know their students by giving them insight to a student's strengths, weaknesses, and interests (Routman, 1988).

Reading workshop includes conferencing, mini-lessons, independent reading, and sharing on a daily basis. Students read literature of their choice and are also read to by the teacher various types of literature (Zemelman & Daniels, 1994). Reading workshop provides interaction with the teacher and peers (Avery, 1993). According to Nancie Atwell (1987),

> Only in regular reading workshops can students gain experience with printed text they need to grow to fluency. They can see me and other readers reading. They can get hooked by whole texts and real stories

and, finally and most importantly, readers in the reading workshop can choose the books that will hook them (p. 160).

Literature circles, a part of reading workshop, are structured around small groups that read and discuss all types of texts. The grouping is based on student choices of literature rather than reading ability. Open-ended group discussions are generated by the students rather than the teacher. The purpose of literature circle discussions is to bring the literature and the reader together (Zemelman & Daniels, 1994).

Portfolios are valuable tools for students, teachers, and parents. Portfolios are "systematic collections of student work selected to provide information about students' attitudes and motivation, level of development and growth over time" (Kingore, 1993, p.1). Portfolios are authentic sources for teachers to assess student learning. Students benefit from the self-evaluation that takes place when using portfolios. The use of portfolios encourages students to take an active role in their learning. The ownership and student choice involved in portfolios develops self-esteem and student pride (Frazier & Paulson, 1992). Portfolios provide a way for students and teachers to involve parents in their child's education. Parents become more aware of their child's abilities (Kingore, 1993).

The educational level of parents has an impact on the child's success in school. Research shows that children of illiterate parents are twice as likely as other children to be illiterate themselves. Family literacy programs have been developed and used across the nation to break this cycle of illiteracy. These programs have been successful in increasing both parents' and children's literacy skills (Merina, 1995).

Teachers alone can not increase literacy skills. Parents also play an important role in the development of a child's early literacy skills. The availability

of books and materials for reading and writing encourages early literacy development, while a lack of such materials, particularly books, can be associated with a lack of literacy (McLane & McNamee, 1990). According McLand and McNamee (1990),

> Close observation of children's early literacy activities suggests that children are likely to become interested in writing and reading when they observe and participate in these activities with more competent writers and readers - especially with parents and older brothers and sisters (McLane & McNamee, p.7).

A child's preschool language development also impacts on progress in reading. The child must have many opportunities to converse with an adult. The more experiences he has the more mature his language will be upon entry into school.

Research done in the last 25 years shows that children who are frequently read to are more likely to read before they enter school or learn to read more easily once reading instruction begins (Strickland & Morrow, 1989). Reading aloud by parents and teachers has several other benefits. Reading aloud improves listening comprehension. Kranz, (1995) writing in the Rockford Register Star, quotes Treiease,

> Listening comprehension comes before reading comprehension. If a child has never heard a word, the child will never say the word. If you've never heard it you've never said it, it's going to be very hard when it's time to read it and write it. So the listening comprehension is what feeds reading comprehension, speaking and writing comprehension (p. 1c).

As a result, a child's listening vocabulary is the building blocks on which a reading vocabulary is developed. Reading aloud instills a desire to read. It also helps to create lifelong readers. Listening to stories builds longer attention spans and a

greater understanding of books and print. Reading aloud is a social experience. The child interacts with the reader to find meaning (Trelease, 1989). Hearing stories read by the teacher, parents, and other students encourages ideas for children's writing.

When a child enters school, parents still continue to play an important role in the development of the child's literacy. In order for reading to become a lifelong skill, parents and teachers need to give encouragement and support, and become partners in the child's education (Cohen, 1995). Parents need to be informed of the teacher's views on language, learning, teaching, and the curriculum. This can be accomplished through newsletters home and inviting parents into the classroom.

It is also the responsibility of the parents to have limits imposed on the amount of television viewing that children are allowed. Research has shown that excessive television viewing has a negative effect on student achievement. If a parent is not home to monitor the amount of television being watched, a dosage device can be purchased. A dosage device controls the length of time the television is on and restricts the programs that are available for viewing (Kranz, 1995). If this is not a viable solution, parents and teachers need to "make books and reading as attractive as watching TV" (Fox, 1993).

Modeling is an effective teaching tool used by teachers and parents to teach and develop a love for reading and writing. Children learn to imitate certain behaviors by observing people significant in their lives. Through modeling of literacy and language skills children learn to read and write (Schuman & Relihan, 1990). Observing others taking telephone messages, writing shopping lists, talking, thinking aloud, and reading a variety of written materials enables the child

to see the importance of literacy skills in daily life. It also teaches the child how to use these skills.

Project Outcomes and Solution Components

The following terminal objective is based on the review of the literature and assessments of students' literacy achievement.

> As a result of the implementation of writer's workshop, during the period of September 1995 to January 1996, the targeted special education early childhood, kindergarten, and first grade classes will increase literacy skills, as measured by student portfolios, teacher-made tests, and published assessment tools.

In order to accomplish the terminal objective, the following processes are necessary.

1. Create a time-line that provides target dates for completion of activities.
2. Gather materials for student writing, assessment, portfolios, teacher use and reference.
3. Incorporate the following selected strategies: journals, book publishing, mini-lessons, writing activities, sharing of writing, student conferences, the reading aloud of literature, and portfolios to be used during writer's workshop.

Action Plan for the Intervention

I. Populations involved in the action plan

- A. Teachers
  1. Early childhood special education teacher
  2. Kindergarten teacher
  3. First grade teacher

B. Targeted students

1. Early childhood special education classes - AM & PM
2. Kindergarten class
3. First grade reading class

II. Period of time for action plan - September 1995 to January 1996

III. Location - Lower elementary school in a small town in northern Illinois

IV. Action Plan

A. Schedule - Target dates

1. Collect materials - 8/25/95
2. Arrange writing area - 8/25/95
3. Create daily schedules for reading and writing activities - 8/28/95
4. Assess students' literacy development - first week of school
5. Introduce materials - first week of school
6. Model writing activities - daily
7. Student writing activities - daily
8. Reassess students' literacy development - January 1995
9. Publish class books - monthly
10. Publish individual books - May 1996

B. Gather materials

1. Student writing materials

Materials will include: paper, pencils, crayons, markers, brass fasteners, glue, stamps, stamp pads, paper clips, tape, stapler, date stamps, folders, stencils, wallpaper, note cards, envelopes, and cardboard.

2. Assessment materials

   a. Letter Identification Sheet (Appendix A)

   b. Letter Identification Score Sheet (Appendix B)

   c. Concepts About Print Test (Appendix C)

   d. Concepts About Print Score Sheet (Appendix D)

   e. 'Ready to Read' Word Test (Appendix E)

   f. Word Test Score Sheet (Appendix F)

   g. Stages of Writing (Appendix G)

3. Portfolio materials

   a. Storage container

   b. Folders for each child

4. Teacher material

   a. Overhead projector

   b. Transparencies

   c. Overhead markers

   d. Chalkboard

   e. Chart paper

5. Reference materials

   a. Posters with word banks

   b. Picture dictionaries

   c. Books

   d. Magazines

C. Strategies to be used for writer's workshop

1. Student journals

   a. Early childhood journals will be blank paper stapled into a booklet. Students will draw a picture, write and then dictate

to an adult, a descriptor on student selected topics.

b. Kindergarten journals will be paper, lined at the bottom, and stapled into a booklet. Kindergarten students will draw a picture, then dictate and/or write in a journal on student selected topics.

c. The first grade students will use spiral notebooks for their journals. Students will draw a picture then dictate and/or write in a journal on student selected topics.

2. Book publishing

a. Individual students will each publish a book by the end of the school year. Ideas for published books will come from journal writings.

1. Early childhood students will dictate and illustrate a book of their own creation.

2. Kindergarten students will write and illustrate a book of their own creation.

3. First grade students will write and illustrate a book of their own creation.

b. Each of the targeted classes will produce one or more group books per month. Books may include pattern and language experience books.

3. Mini-lessons

Brief daily lessons (5-10 minutes) will begin writer's workshop. The lessons will be whole group instruction. The mini-lessons will be from the following categories: procedures, strategies writers use, qualities of good writing, and skills. Topics for the mini-lessons will

be determined by teacher observation of students' writing.

Examples of possible mini-lessons are:

a. procedures - establishing workshop rules; using a writing folder; and writing the title, author's name, and date on the writing.

b. strategies - choosing topics; rereading for clarity and completeness; and lining out to make changes rather than erasing.

c. qualities of good writing - writing effective titles; omitting extra "ands"; and adding information for clarity.

d. skills - managing space; using picture dictionaries; and using capital letters to start sentences.

4. Writing activities

Activities for all targeted classes may include: cards, thank you notes, messages, invitations, signs and posters, assigned extension writing activities related to other curriculum, journal entries, and student published books.

5. Sharing of writing

The targeted classes will each have daily large group sharing, where two or three children read their writing to the group and receive responses. The author will sit in an author's chair, where the student will share their writing with the class. Classmates are given a chance to ask authors questions about their stories. Group sharing time will last approximately 10-15 minutes. Journal sharing will be done at the end of writer's workshop.

6. Student conferences

Informal and formal conferences will be conducted in each of the targeted classrooms.

a. Informal conferences between students and teachers will be conducted during group writer's workshop time. The teachers will walk around the classroom spending one to two minutes with each student. The students will be asked questions about their drawings and writings. Conferences will be held daily.

b. Formal conferences between the teacher and small groups of children will be held prior to the publishing of each child's book. The children bring to the conference what they consider to be their best writing. Books will be shared and suggestions for improvements will be made. The children will then revise and edit their work. Estimated conference time would be 10-15 minutes. Formal conferences will be held on an as needed basis.

7. Read aloud literature

All types of literature including big books, fables, fairy tales, bibliographies, fiction, non-fiction, poetry, and chapter books will be read to expose the targeted students to various styles and forms of writing from which they can base their own writings.

8. Portfolios

Students' portfolios will contain student and teacher selected writings that reflect the stages of student development.

V. Reasons for choosing writer's workshop as part of action plan:

A. Allows for student choice

B. Provides student ownership

C. Allows for student individuality

D. Provides real writing opportunities

E. Increases motivation

F. Provides opportunities in meaningful, whole contexts

G. Allows for social interactions

H. Integrates reading and writing

I. Encourages student responsibility

J. Exposure to various types of writing

Methods of Assessment

In order to assess the effects of the intervention, assessments of student growth in the areas of reading and writing will be used. This growth will be measured by student portfolios, teacher-made tests, and published assessment tools.

Chapter 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of Intervention

The objective of this project was to increase literacy skills through the use of Writer's Workshop. The Writer's Workshop was implemented in three different classrooms. These students ranged in age from three to seven years.

Early Childhood

Two early childhood classes participated in the daily writing activities. The morning class consisted of five students, ranging in age from three to four years. The afternoon class consisted of eight students, all five years old. The two classes were at varying stages of writing, due in part to the age variation.

During writing sessions the 13 students in the class were instructed to use a pencil for writing, not erasing any part of their writing. They were also instructed to cross out mistakes that they felt compelled to change. As in all classroom writing, they were to begin writing any words, letters or their name on the left side of all papers. Only one side of the paper was to be used. The students scribbled, drew pictures, or wrote letters depending on individual stages of writing. Writing sessions lasted approximately 30 minutes and ended 15 minutes before dismissal.

Upon completion of daily journal writing, each student dictated individually to the teacher what had been written. The teacher wrote the student dictated words below any symbols or letters to correspond to sentences spoken by the

student. As a final step, each student stamped the date on the journal page or writing sample.

Topics were suggested for writing in September, at the onset due to the delayed expressive language in the classes. Examples of topics covered were story reflections, field trips, family activities and cooking experiences. Topics were not suggested after December.

In January, changes were noticed in the students who were five years old. Complete sentences became more frequent, sentence length increased and letters, rather than symbols began appearing in writing samples.

Beginning in March, a horizontal line at the bottom of each blank journal page was included for the students. The older students began using symbols and letters on the lines. The younger students began dictating complete sentences, and were in the early stages of their writing.

The use of an author's chair was introduced in September, but became too time consuming. The younger class was unable to present thoughts verbally to other students. Many ideas were repeated daily in the older group of students. Examples of an early childhood journal can be found in Appendix M.

Students began associating letters and sounds in their daily writing by February. They began noticing beginning letters and corresponding sounds other than the letters appearing in student names. Awareness that letters have corresponding sounds began to occur.

Throughout the school year, students brought in writing samples that they had produced at home. The students began sharing these writing samples with teachers and other students. These samples were displayed in the classroom.

Group books were produced throughout the school year. Crayons were used in these books. The use of crayons seemed to produce more creative writing for the older students. Topics for group books came from classroom

reading. Many were repetitious and the students were able to read the group books to other students in their class. Topics for group books included seasons, holidays, animals and colors. Students worked in cooperative groups in order to make books. By February, all of the students in both classes were able to read the group book that they had written.

Kindergarten

In September 1995, a Writer's Workshop was begun with the kindergarten students. Writing folders were kept for each child. The folders consisted of a three-pronged folder with approximately 10 sheets of paper. The top half of the paper was blank allowing for illustrations. The lower half of the paper was ruled for handwriting. Pages were added on an as needed basis. This helped keep pages in order, without as many pages skipped. In December, students were offered a choice of this paper or paper with additional lines.

The amount of time spent on Writer's Workshop varied according to the day of the week and other scheduled events. On Tuesdays and Fridays there were scheduling conflicts and the workshop was done as a whole group activity for 15 to 20 minutes. The students and I often became frustrated over the lack of individual time available on these days. Many students required assurance and encouragement in their efforts, therefore, long lines for teacher assistance would form. On Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays the writing was a part of center time. Center time consisted of a variety of activities set up in stations around the room. Four or five activities were offered as choices for the day in the centers. These activities included: art projects, math activities, reading center, listening center, and writing center. Center time was approximately one hour. During this time, students were encouraged to rotate around the different centers at 10-15 minute intervals. There was usually no set time when students had to switch centers. At approximately 10-15 minute intervals, I would remind the children

they might want to finish the activity at the center they were at and move to another center. The students were free to continue with the activity if they needed more time. This allowed children who wanted to add more detail into their pictures or, who were attempting to write using developmental spelling the opportunity to spend more time at that center. It also allowed some freedom for the reluctant writers to spend less required time on their writing. The reluctant or less interested writers did not become discouraged or who feel pressured to write for long periods of time. This appeared to develop their level of comfort with writing. One of my weekly mother-helpers often commented on how her son disliked pencil-paper activities and would never choose writing as his first center activity. She was amazed one day in February when her son eagerly went to get his journal. Not only had he chosen writing as his first choice, but he also spent extra time at that center.

The first day I began with a mini-lesson on the different stages of writing. I explained that writing was used to communicate ideas to others. I demonstrated that drawing a picture of a house, scribbling lines, writing "h" for the beginning sound, "hs" for the beginning and ending sounds, the word "house", or "The house is blue." were all attempts to communicate through writing. I stressed the importance of any attempts at writing and that all stages of writing were acceptable.

The majority of the students' responses tended to be to draw a picture and make no attempt to write letters or letter-like forms. Student comments included "I can't write," "It's too hard," or "I don't know how." Students were willing to dictate their story, however, few were willing to attempt writing on their own. They appeared to be overly concerned and self-conscious about "not doing it right", even after many mini-lessons which stressed there was no right or wrong answer in their daily writing.

Topics for student writing were left up to the individual students. I found if I assigned a topic, students had more trouble getting started and had less interest in their work. Out of the 19 students in this class, only one student occasionally had problems thinking of a topic.

As students developed more of an awareness of letters and sounds through reading activities, they began to attempt to write more letter-like forms and try to sound out words. By January, students began to feel more confident about their own abilities. Teacher dictation began to be replaced by student writing and teacher transcribing. Transcribing consisted of the teacher writing underneath the student writing as the student read what they had written. The intended purpose of transcribing was the re-reading of the student writing by parents or the teacher at a later date. An added bonus was discovered when some of the students began to refer back to the teacher's writing from previous days to spell a word they remembered using before. This lead the way for these students to develop their own spelling vocabulary. As the year progressed, a few students also began to search the room for unfamiliar words they wanted to use in their writing. They began reading and writing words from pocket charts, poems, big books, and class writings. Students appeared to feel safe in their attempts at writing. A little praise and encouragement was all some children needed to realize not only could they read their work, but the teacher could also read their developmentally spelled words. An example of development through the stages of writing can be found in Appendix I, evolution of a kindergartner's writing.

Conferencing time became less of a dictation time and more of a time to help the students write the sounds they heard in the words. This helped them make important connections between reading and writing. It was exciting to watch them as they developed these skills. It also became even more time

consuming and difficult to conference with as many students on a daily basis. Students and teacher had to adjust to meeting less frequently. Students, however, began helping each other more, which was an added bonus.

I originally planned on changing my mini-lessons daily to meet the needs of my students. I soon found I needed to keep my lessons very basic and repeat them daily for multiple days. Early mini-lessons included such topics as stages of writing, matching the illustration to the words you want to say, dating your writing, thinking of topics to write about, and care of your writing folder. As students made more attempts at writing on their own, mini-lessons were planned to meet the needs of these students. Topics such as beginning a sentence with a capital letter, ending the sentence with a period, capitalizing names, leaving spaces between words, sounding out or stretching out words, and spelling common words such as the, this and is.

The half-day kindergarten program limited the amount of time available to spend on Writer's Workshop. It was scheduled as a daily activity, however, other planned activities such as music, recess, library, computer, group speech, and special programs often limited the amount of available time. This often frustrated the students as well as myself. When a day's activities prevented Writer's Workshop, many students would complain about not getting time to write. The time limitations also prevented the students from sharing their writing with others as much as I would have liked. Group sharing was usually replaced by sharing with a friend or partner. I would like to work on adding more opportunities for authors' chair as a way to help encourage the students in their writing.

The students enjoyed making and reading group books. These books followed a pattern often found in a book read in class. A favorite was spin off on Mary Wore Her Red Dress and Henry Wore His Green Sneakers by Merle Peek (1985). Each student dictated their name, the color of an article of clothing they

were wearing, and illustrated the page by drawing themselves wearing the article of clothing. This class book was read so often, it required a new binding by November.

Other class books included books written by cooperative groups. One of these cooperative activities required the students in each group to agree on an animal to write about. Each child illustrated one or two pages to contribute to the book with corresponding words. Each page illustrated a part of the animal, for example, the legs, the feet, the tail, etc. The last page was a drawing of the whole animal. These group books provided excellent opportunities for cooperative activities. The drawback was the amount of time these books required. I found it very helpful to plan these activities on a day when I had a parent helper in the room. Their assistance helped the students use their time wisely and stay on task.

As part of the Writer's Workshop I had planned to have each child publish their own individual book. I was unable to meet this goal during the intervention time frame. I plan to have each child publish a book by the end of the school year with the help of parent helpers.

First Grade

I began using Writer's Workshop with the low reading group in September. The children at this point in time were apprehensive about writing. Many of them had never been asked to write like this before. The students also did not know all the letters of the alphabet or the corresponding sounds. This made writing even more difficult.

The students wrote daily in journals. Several different types of paper were used in the journals through out the intervention. The students used notebook paper, blank paper, handwriting paper, and paper that was half lined and half blank. In the beginning the notebook paper did not work very well

because the lines were too small for the students. The children did not seem to have a preference about which type of paper they used as long as they could illustrate their story when using any type. It was easiest for me to read when the handwriting paper was used.

The first few weeks of Writer's Workshop the focus of the mini-lessons were on the structure of the workshop and showing the students that all of them could write. The children really had a difficult time in the beginning writing for a 15 to 20 minute period. It seemed wherever I went for an informal conference I had a line of students following me. When this happened I stopped what I was doing and reminded everyone that they needed to remain in their seats. The first few weeks many of the informal conferences were used to encourage children in their writing and to help them connect letter sounds with words. I would also transcribe what they had written at the bottom of the page, time permitting.

The students were free to write about any topic. I found that the writing was much better when the students could choose their own topics. When I assigned a topic to write about, I felt that the quality and length of the writing suffered. I did several mini-lessons on finding topics to write about. This, as well as the sharing of the writing, helped the children find writing topics.

The students made a monthly class book. The books were patterned after a story that the students had read or a story that had been read aloud to them. For example, when the sound of the letter "Bb" was being taught, I read to the class The Berenstains' B Book by Stan and Jan Berenstain (1971). The class then made their own B Book. The students did not mind making the class books, but seemed to prefer writing in their journals on topics of their choice. On the days that the students worked on class books they did not write in their journals. They would make comments like "When do we get to do journals?".

The first month of the intervention was very frustrating for me because the children were not able to work independently. It seemed that many were afraid they were doing it wrong and wanted to know after each word that was written that what they did was okay. It was hard to give the children the attention they needed. I also felt that this low reading class was at a disadvantage because there were limited models for the students. They were not able to see how the higher students wrote, nor hear what they wrote about.

By October, some of the students were really doing a good job with their writing and they did not require as much one-to-one help. This allowed me to really concentrate on the students still having difficulty. The children were also used to the routine of Writer's Workshop and knew what was expected of them.

Once the students understood how to write, the focus of the informal conferences changed. I would briefly speak with each child about their writing and then I would ask a few questions about it. By December, many of the students were able to write with ease.

The focus of the mini-lessons also changed. Instead of teaching the children how to connect letter sounds to words and the procedures of Writer's Workshop I began to use the mini-lessons to teach mechanics of writing and qualities of good writing. Some of these concepts were difficult for the children, so these mini-lessons were repeated as needed.

I did not begin formal conferences until late January. I did not feel any of the students were ready to edit or publish their work until this time. I began formal conferencing with two students. They read to each other a story they had each chosen to publish. After each student read the other child would ask any questions that they had about the story and also offer any suggestions. This was very difficult for them to do. I ended up modeling this for them. I am hoping that with practice and encouragement that these skills will develop.

The two boys that began bookmaking at the end of January finished their books up in March. The process was long and slow. After the formal conference the boys worked on any changes that were suggested. Then I conferenced with each boy separately. We discussed their story and talked more about editing for specific things like capital letters and periods. After the boys had done this I had each of them do a have-a-go (see Appendix L). To do a have-a-go the boys circled five words in their story that they felt were misspelled. After these five words were copied onto the first column of the have-a-go. Then they turned the have-a-go in to me. I looked at every word and marked with a star each letter that was correct. The letters that were incorrect I put an "x" above. I crossed out extra letters and put a "o" above the word where a letter was needed. Then I conferenced with the students again. I explained the marking system and we went over all the words, talking about what was right and what was not. Then the children tried another spelling. After each spelling I would mark what was correct and what needed to be changed. The fifth column was for the correct spelling of the word. Once the words were all spelled correctly on the have-a-go the students made the spelling corrections in their book. The students had to edit the spelling for only five words at this point. Any more and I think it would have been too much. I completed the rest of the editing when I typed the story for publishing. After the story was typed the students illustrated it. The decision of how to illustrate the book was left up to the author. Then I laminated and bound the books. The book making process was very motivating to the students. They even worked on it during their recess. By March, only two student's had published a book and five others were in the process. The appendix contains samples from one boy's journal. He is currently working on publishing the chicken story he wrote in his journal in March. I hope, all the students will publish by May. The publishing process is complex, so I found it easier to work with only

a few students at a time until they understood the process. Once they understood the process, others would begin the publishing process.

The sharing of writing was a very important part of Writer's Workshop. The students really looked forward to this. The sharing took place at the end of the workshop and usually lasted five to ten minutes. The students would sit in the author's chair when they shared their writing. Only a few students shared their writing each day. The children were randomly chosen, unless one had written something that I thought the others should see or hear. At the end of each sharing that student would receive an energizer from the rest of the class. An energizer is the recognition of their work by clapping, a group cheer and etc. This sharing of writing, I feel was important for several reasons. One is that some of the better students served as models for the lower students. It also gave ideas for topics to the other students. The children also felt good about themselves and their writing. The energizers helped with this. Unfortunately, due to time constraints the students were unable to do sharing on a daily basis. Having longer that an hour and a half for reading and writing would have been helpful.

In September, seven of the 16 students in the low reading group were receiving Reading Recovery. I do believe that this was very beneficial to the students. The Reading Recovery teacher in our school, felt that this writing program was very supportive for the Reading Recovery students. Both programs support the belief that reading and writing are skills that are interrelated. The writing helps the reading and vice versa. Out of these seven students only two remained in the program in March. Four of the students successfully completed the program in January. The one remaining student was discontinued due to the lack of gain he showed. In late January and early February, four more of the students from this low reading class entered the Reading Recovery program.

The Writer's Workshop also helped students dealing with other problems. One of my students was truant. He was absent 26.5 days and tardy 12 days, the first three quarters of school. Despite all these absences and tardys this student made surprising gains in his writing. In September, this student would randomly write down any letters and make up something that it said or he would just say "I don't know what it says". He was making no connections between letter sounds and words. By February, this student was writing on a topic and would also add supporting details. At this point, he was also beginning to use standard spelling. Another student really struggled with the reading and writing. His handwriting was extremely difficult to read. He was referred for testing in September and was placed in a special education class for Reading and Spelling in January. At this point, he was in stage three of writing and was slowly making progress.

In our action plan we stated that we would use writing portfolios. We found after several weeks of attempting to use portfolios that it was too difficult for these levels of students. The children could not read what they had written and therefore had difficulty choosing a piece of writing and stating reasons for their selection. This was very frustrating and discouraging for them. For this reason, we found saving all writing samples more beneficial and saved valuable classroom time. As an alternative to the end of the year portfolios, we are binding all of their writing in book form for them to keep.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

In order to assess the effects of Writer's Workshop on students' reading and writing skills the following measures were used: letter recognition test (Appendix A & B), concepts about print test (Appendix C & D), word lists (Appendix E & F), and three student writing samples.

Table 3

Number of Students in Each Score Class for the Letter Identification Tests

September 1995 and March 1996

Score Class	Early Childhood		Kindergarten		Reading Recovery		First Grade	
	Sept.	March	Sept.	March	Sept.	March	Sept.	March
91-100	0	2	2	12	0	7	0	8
81-90	1	1	6	1	1	0	2	0
71-80	1	0	1	2	3	0	2	0
61-70	0	1	3	0	0	0	4	0
51-60	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0
41-50	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
40 and Below	10	6	7	2	1	0	0	0

In September, approximately half of all the sample students scored above 60 percent on the letter identification test. In comparison, March results indicated 72 percent of the students scored 60 percent or more on the same test.

The early childhood programs' student population ranged in age from three to five years. The results of this assessment did not show a large gain. We feel this was due to the fact that developmentally not all of these students were ready to master this skill. The researchers felt the students showed an increased awareness of letters and sounds. For example, students were making connections between beginning sounds of words and the letters that made those sounds. Another example would be that in March students were able to distinguish between numbers and letters, whereas, in September many could not.

Kindergarten and first grade students showed significant gains in letter identification. Kindergarten students scoring above 90 percent went from 11 percent in September to 63 percent in March showing a gain of 52 percent. Thirty-seven percent of the kindergartners scored 40 percent or below in September. By March, the percentage of students scoring in this range dropped

to 11 percent. The data for both reading recovery and first grade students was similar. In September, none of the first graders scored above 90 percent. In March, the assessment results indicated 100 percent of the students scored above 90 percent.

Table 4

Number of Students in Each Score Class for the Concepts About Print Tests September 1995 to March 1996

Score Class	Early Childhood		Kindergarten		Reading Recovery		First Grade	
	Sept.	March	Sept.	March	Sept.	March	Sept.	March
91-100	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
81-90	0	0	0	2	0	2	0	3
71-80	0	0	0	4	0	4	0	3
61-70	0	0	1	7	0	1	0	2
51-60	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	0
41-50	0	0	3	3	1	0	5	0
31-40	0	0	4	0	3	0	2	0
21-30	1	4	4	0	2	0	2	0
11-20	2	0	5	0	0	0	0	0
0-10	10	9	1	0	0	0	0	0

Early childhood students showed only a slight gain on this test. Again we felt this was due to the fact that this assessment tested the students on concepts not developmentally appropriate for this age level.

Students from the kindergarten class improved their awareness of print with five percent scoring above 60 percent in September to 79 percent in March. Seventy-four percent of the students scored 40 percent or below in September and this dropped to zero percent in March. All reading recovery and first grade students scored above 60 percent by March, as compared to September when these students all fell between the ranges of 21 to 60 percent. Analysis of this

data indicates that many kindergarten and first grade students have acquired the skills necessary for reading.

Table 5

Words Identified by Students on Word Identification Tests

September 1995 to March 1996

Number of Words	Early Childhood		Kindergarten		Reading Recovery		First Grade	
	Sept.	March	Sept.	March	Sept.	March	Sept.	March
15	0	0	0	1	0	4	0	3
14	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1
13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
12	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	2
11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
10	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
9	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
7	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
6	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
3	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0
2	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0
1	2	0	4	6	6	0	7	0
0	11	13	12	1	1	0	2	0

Analysis of the test scores indicated that early childhood students showed no gains. We felt this is due to the fact that word acquisition skills were not age appropriate. In September, all the kindergartners read four words or less from the word list. By March, all but one student showed an increase in words known, with 37 percent of the class recognizing six or more words by March. The reading recovery and first grade students recognized one word or less in September. This increased to nine or more words by March, with 100 percent of

the reading recovery students and 88 percent of the first graders recognizing 12 or more words.

Table 6

Number of Students in Each Stage of Writing

September 1995 to March 1996

Stages of Writing	Early Childhood		Kindergarten		First Grade	
	Sept.	March	Sept.	March	Sept.	March
Stage 6	0	0	0	5	0	15
Stage 5	0	0	1	6	2	0
Stage 4	0	0	2	6	3	0
Stage 3	0	6	2	2	11	0
Stage 2	3	2	1	0	0	0
Stage 1	10	5	0	0	0	0
Refused to try	0	0	13	0	0	0

Seventy-seven percent of the early childhood students were in stage one of writing in the fall. Fifty percent of these students progressed to stages two or three by March with 46 percent of the class in stage three. It should be noted that the researchers felt the majority of students that remained in stage one were in the writing stage developmentally appropriate for their age.

Results indicated that in March, 94 percent of kindergarten and first grade students were in stages four, five, or six of writing. This is an increase of 80 percent from September. We feel that this increase was due in part to the fact that 27 percent of the kindergarten students refused to attempt any writing in September. By March, all students realized correct spelling was not a factor in their attempts to write and were producing recognizable writing. Eighty-seven percent of the students who refused to write were making the connection between letters and sounds of words. The majority of the first grade students

were in stage three in September. By March, all students were in stage six of writing. Writer's Workshop appeared to be supportive for the reading recovery students as indicated by the similar first grade testing results.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the presentation and analysis of the data on reading and writing skills, the students exhibited significant growth in the acquisition of literacy skills. It is our opinion that this has been a beneficial intervention for all students, due to the fact that every student showed an increase in at least one area of testing. We feel that Writer's Workshop was beneficial due to its components and the commitment of the students and teachers to reading and writing.

In our opinion, this intervention requires a flexible schedule and a large block of time on a daily basis to be most effective. Time limitations due to restrictive daily scheduling could be a drawback. A large block of time is required due to the many components of the writer's workshop.

The intervention was more successful for kindergarten and first grade students than for early childhood students. This could be due to developmental appropriateness. The early childhood students did benefit from this exposure to literacy.

Recommend changes would include the use of a three-ringed binder instead of the three-pronged folder used in kindergarten. The size of the binder would accommodate journal pages for the whole year, whereas, the folders were at capacity level by March. First grade also intends to begin using a three-ringed binder. The binder would protect the pages and allow for easier access. The researchers feel the need to expand on the time allowed for the sharing of writing through the use of author's chair. This would be more beneficial done on a daily basis.

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"Appendices"

Appendix A

Letter Identification Sheet

A	F	K	P	W	Z
B	H	O	J	U	
C	Y	L	Q	M	
D	N	S	X	I	
E	G	R	V	T	
a	f	k	p	w	z
b	h	o	j	u	a
c	y	l	q	m	
d	n	s	x	i	
e	g	r	v	t	g

Clay (1985)

Appendix B

Letter Identification Score Sheet

Date: _____

Name: _____ Age: _____ TEST SCORE: /54

Recorder: _____ Date of Birth: _____ STANINE GROUP:

	A	S	Word	I.R.		A	S	Word	I.R.
A					a				
F					f				
K					k				
P					p				
W					w				
Z					z				
B					b				
H					h				
O					o				
J					j				
U					u				
					a				
C					c				
Y					y				
L					l				
Q					q				
M					m				
D					d				
N					n				
S					s				
X					x				
I					i				
E					e				
G					g				
R					r				
V					v				
T					t				
					g				
				TOTALS					

Confusions:

Letters UnKnown:

Comment:

Recording:

A Alphabet response: tick (check)

S Letter sound response: tick (check)

Word Record the word the child gives

IR Incorrect response: Record what the child says

TOTAL SCORE

Appendix C

Concepts About Print Test

Say to the child: *"I'm going to read you this story but I want you to help me."*

[illegible]

Item 1 Test: For orientation of book. Pass the booklet to the child, holding the book vertically by outside edge, spine towards the child.

Say: *"Show me the front of this book."*

Score: 1 point for the correct response.

[illegible]

Item 2 Test: Concept that print, not picture, carries the message.

Say: *"I'll read this story. You help me. Show me where to start reading. Where do I begin to read?"*

Read the text to the child.

Score: 1 for print, 0 for picture.

[illegible]

Item 3 Test: For directional rules.

Say: *"Show me where to start."*

Score: 1 for top left.

Item 4 Say: *"Which way do I go?"*

Score: 1 for left to right.

Item 5 Say: *"Where do I go after that?"*

Score: 1 for return sweep to left.

(Score items 3-5 if all movements are demonstrated in one response.)

Item 6 Test: Word by word pointing.

Say: *"Point to it while I read it."* (Read slowly, but fluently.)

Score: 1 for exact matching.

[illegible]

Item 7 Test: Concept of first and last.

Read the text to the child.

Say: *"Show me the first part of the story."*
"Show me the last part."

Score: 1 point if BOTH are correct in any sense, i.e. applied to the whole text OR to a line, OR to a word, OR to a letter.

[illegible]

Item 8 Test: Inversion of picture.

Say: *"Show me the bottom of the picture"* (slowly and deliberately).
(Do NOT mention upside-down.)

Score: 1 for verbal explanation, OR for pointing to top of page, OR for turning the book around and pointing appropriately.

[illegible]

Item 9 Test: Response to inverted print.

Say: *"Where do I begin?"*
"Which way do I go?"
"Where do I go after that?"

Score: 1 for beginning with "The" (fastest), or "I" (slower), and moving right to left across the lower and then the upper line, OR 1 for turning the book around and moving left to right in the conventional manner.

Read the text to the child.

[illegible]

Item 10 Test: Line sequence.

Say: *"What's wrong with this?"* (Read immediately the bottom line first, then the top line. Do NOT point.)

Score: 1 for comment on line order.

[illegible]

Item 11 Test: A left page is read before a right page.

Say: *"Where do I start reading?"*

Score: 1 point for left page indication.

Item 12 Test: Word sequence.

Say: *"What's wrong on this page?"* (Point to the page number 12., NOT the text.)

Read the text slowly as if it were correct.

Score: 1 point for comment on either error.

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Item 13 Test: Letter order.

Say: *'What's wrong on this page?'* (Point to the page number 13 — NOT to the text.)

Read the text slowly as if it were correct.

Score: 1 point for any ONE re-ordering of letters that is noticed and explained.

[redacted]

Item 14 Test: Re-ordering letters within a word.

Say: *'What's wrong with the writing on this page?'*

Read the text slowly as if it were correct.

Score: 1 point for ONE error noticed.

Item 15 Test: Meaning of a question mark.

Say: *'What's this for?'* (Point to or trace the question mark with a finger or pencil.)

Score: 1 point for explanation of function or name.

[redacted]

Test: Punctuation.

Read the text.

Say: *'What's this for?'*

Item 16 Point to or trace with a pencil, the full stop (period).

Item 17 Point to or trace with a pencil, the comma.

Item 18 Point to or trace with a pencil, the quotation marks.

Item 19 Test: Capital and lower-case correspondence.

Say: *'Find a little letter like this.'*

Send: Point to capital T and demonstrate by pointing to an upper case T and a lower case t if the child does not succeed.

Sioux: As above for S and s.

Say: *'Find a little letter like this.'*

Send: Point to capital M, H in turn.

Sioux: Point to capital T, B in turn.

Score: Send: 1 point if BOTH Mm and Hh are located.

Sioux: 1 point if BOTH Tt and Bb are located.

[redacted]

Item 20 Test: Reversible words.

Read the text.

Say: *'Show me was.'*
'Show me on.'

Score: 1 point for BOTH correct.

[redacted]

Have two pieces of light card (13 × 5 cm) that the child can hold and slide easily over the line of text to block out words and letters. To start, lay the cards on the page but leave all print exposed. Open the cards out between each question asked.

Item 21 Test: Letter concepts.

Say: *'This story says* (Send) *"The water splashed in the hole"* [or (Sioux) *"The stone rolled down the hill"*]. *I want you to push the cards across the story like this until all you can see is* (deliberately with stress) *just one letter.'* (Demonstrate the movement of the cards but do not do the exercise.)

Say: *'Now show me two letters.'*

Score: 1 point if BOTH are correct.

Item 22 Test: Word concept.

Say: *'Show me just one word.'*
'Now show me two words.'

Score: 1 point if BOTH are correct.

Item 23 Test: First and last letter concepts.

Say: *'Show me the first letter of a word.'*
'Show me the last letter of a word.'

Score: 1 point if BOTH are correct.

Item 24 Test: Capital letter concepts.

Say: *'Show me a capital letter.'*

Score: 1 point if correct.

Clay (1985)

Appendix D

Concepts About Print Score Sheet

Date: _____

Name: _____ Age: _____ TEST SCORE: /24

Recorder: _____ Date of Birth: _____ STANINE GROUP:

PAGE	SCORE	ITEM	COMMENT
Cover		1. Front of book	
2/3		2. Print contains message	
4/5 4/5 4/5 4/5		3. Where to start 4. Which way to go 5. Return sweep to left 6. Word by word matching	
6		7. First and last concept	
7		8. Bottom of picture	
8/9		9. Begin 'The' (Sand) or 'I' (Stones) bottom line, top OR turn book	
10/11		10. Line order altered	
12/13 12/13 12/13		11. Left page before right 12. One change in word order 13. One change in letter order	
14/15 14/15		14. One change in letter order 15. Meaning of ?	
16/17 16/17 16/17 16/17		16. Meaning of full stop 17. Meaning of comma 18. Meaning of quotation marks 19. Locate M m H h (Sand) OR T I B b (Stones)	
18/19		20. Reversible words was, no	
20 20 20 20		21. One letter: two letters 22. One word: two words 23. First and last letter of word 24. Capital letter	

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Appendix E

'Ready To Read' Word Test

LIST A	LIST B	LIST C
Practice Word the	Practice Word said	Practice Word is
I	and	Father
Mother	to	come
are	will	for
here	look	a
me	he	you
shouted	up	at
am	like	school
with	in	went
car	where	get
children	Mr	we
help	going	they
not	big	ready
too	go	this
meet	let	boys
away	on	please

Clay (1985)

Appendix F

Word Test Score Sheet

Use any one list of words.

Date: _____

Name: _____ TEST SCORE: ____ /15

Age: _____ Date of Birth: _____ STANINE GROUP: ____

Recorder: _____

Record incorrect responses beside word

LIST A	LIST B	LIST C
I	and	Father
Mother	to	come
are	will	for
here	look	a
me	he	you
should	up	all
am	like	school
with	in	went
car	where	get
children	Mr	we
help	going	they
not	big	ready
too	go	the
meat	let	boys
away	on	please

COMMENT:

Clay (1985)

Appendix G

Stages in Children's Writing

STAGE 1: SCRIBBLING

Scribbling is your child's experimentation with writing. It can be compared with your child's babbling as an infant. Both babbling and scribbling need lots of adult praise. Just as you encouraged your child to babble, it is very important to encourage your child to scribble.

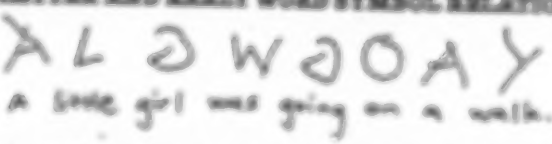
STAGE 2: LINEAR DRAWING

This stage is similar to the stage at which a baby begins to string sounds together. It shows that your child now knows how writing should look.

STAGE 3: LETTERLIKE FORMS

By now your child's writing may look recognizable. Your child is making his or her writing look like "real" writing, just as he or she turned babbling into the sounds of language.

STAGE 4: LETTER AND EARLY WORD SYMBOL RELATIONSHIPS



This stage is similar to the stage at which your child said his or her first words. As parents, you understood and accepted many errors in these first words. You will see many of the same errors in your child's writing as he or she learns to make the connection between letters and sounds of words. Whole words are often represented by just one letter during this stage.

STAGE 5: INVENTED SPELLING

In this stage your child is beginning to realize that each letter has a sound. At first he or she may only use beginning sounds for words.

STAGE 6: STANDARD SPELLING

In this stage your child recognizes and attempts to use standard spelling.

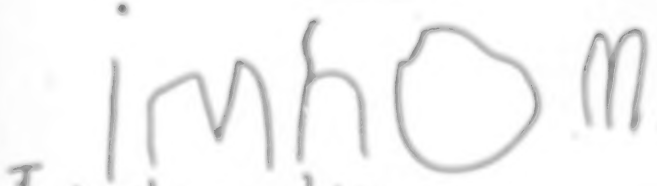
Schlosser & Phillips (1991)

Appendix H

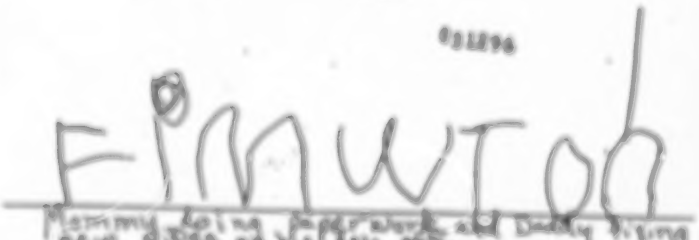
Evolution Of An Early Childhood Student's Journal

No horses in the garden.

I made a sun.



I write machine.



Mommy doing housework and Daddy fixing cars and his day off.

Evolution Of A Kindergartner's Journal

I liked teddy bear day. 9-21-95

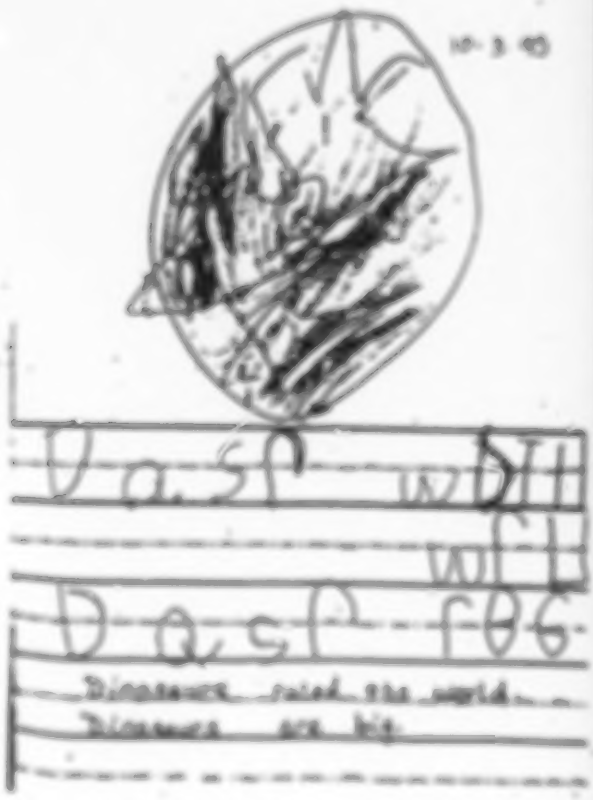
Garfield. This is my Garfield

Me and my friends doing journals.

This is my family dancing and I am in the middle

Appendix J

Evolution Of A First Grader's Journal



I like to

11-15-95

red and see
the soud of the
wirks and the
ded r's after Van
to root

I am in the
Inggabater I
hach no
baeets here
so I pic
thru thringbater
I sweer there

Can I rurh
thru the hath
I am scark
and in the nasiur
some one pikems
up heputs
me back in

some on eat
me out I go
toat arm
I meet pigs
and hen and
horsir and

HAVE-A-GO

copy word → correct

S2			S3

HAVE-A-GO

copy word			correct
rain	rain		rain
when	when		when
corn	corn		corn
lightning	lightning	lightning	lightning
thunder			thunder

A Student Completed Have-A-Go

Appendix H

Early Childhood Test Results

Subject Early Childhood

Period Beginning September 1995
Period Ending March 1996

Students	Letter Recognition Test				Sight Word Test				Word Test				Writing Samples			
	Sept.'95		March'96	%	Sept.'95		March'96		Sept.'95		March'96		Sept.'95		March'96	
1	24		21	41	1		2		0		0		1		1	
2	0		0	0	0		2		0		0		1		1	
3	0		4	7	1		2		0		0		1		1	
4	0		33	61	1		6		0		0		1		1	
5	3		14	26	5		1		0		0		1		1	
6	41		48	88	0		0		1		0		1		3	
7	2		8	14	0		2		0		0		1		3	
8	0		26	48	0		1		0		0		1		3	
9	44		49	91	1		6		1		0		2		3	
10	19		50	93	4		7		0		0		2		3	
11	0		0	0	1		1		0		0		1		2	
12	0		1	2	2		2		0		0		1		2	
13	0		9	17	3		5		0		0		2		3	
14																

Appendix N

Kindergarten Test Results

Subject Kindergarten

Period Beginning September 1995
Period Ending March 1996

Students	Letter Recognition Test			Concepts About Print Test		Word Test		Writing Sample Averages	
	Sept. '95	March '96	%	Sept. '95	March '96	Sept. '95	March '96	Sept. '95	March '96
1	8	32	59	1	10	0	1	3	4
2	48	53	98	8	15	1	6	R	4
3	5	10	19	3	11	0	0	R	3
4	8	28	52	3	15	0	1	R	4
5	53	54	100	14	18	3	10	4	5
6	46	53	98	8	18	0	7	R	6
7	44	54	100	6	20	1	6	R	5
8	36	52	96	7	16	0	2	R	5
9	3	6	11	9	15	0	1	R	3
10	37	52	96	7	18	0	4	R	5
11	11	45	83	4	11	0	1	R	4
12	37	54	99	3	14	0	2	2	4
13	53	54	100	16	24	4	15	R	6
14	48	54	100	11	21	1	12	4	6
15	46	54	100	12	19	1	3	R	5
16	10	53	98	8	16	0	1	R	6
17	47	53	98	10	22	2	9	5	5
18	38	52	96	5	15	0	3	3	6
19	18	41	76	3	16	0	1	R	4

Appendix O

First Grade Test Results

Subject First Grade

Period Beginning September 1995

Period Ending March 1996

Students	Letter Recognition Test: Sept. '95	Letter Recognition Test: March '96	Letter Recognition Test: %	Concepts About Print Test: Sept. '95	Concepts About Print Test: March '96	Word Test: Sept. '95	Word Test: March '96	Writing Vocabulary: Sept. '95	Writing Vocabulary: March '96
1	35	54	100	14	21	0	15	5	60
2	41	52	96	10	17	1	15	3	60
3	38	50	93	10	18	1	15	4	60
4	21	52	96	13	11	1	15	4	60
5	39	50	93	5	18	1	15	3	60
6	32	52	96	9	14	1	12	3	60
7	36	54	100	9	19	1	13	5	60
8	44	52	96	12	160	1	12	3	60
9	26	52	96	7	21	1	15	3	60
10	47	53	98	9	21	1	14	3	60
11	39	54	100	7	21	1	15	3	60
12	27	53	98	8	160	0	14	3	60
13	26	64	122	9	21	1	14	4	60
14	45	52	96	10	15	1	9	3	60
15	45	N/A		12	N/A	1	N/A	3	N/A
16	34	53	98	10	19	0	12	3	60
17									